



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Member Organizations

*The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services*

Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice

Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center

Danbury, CT

*Domestic Violence Program
United Services*

Dayville, CT

*Network Against Domestic
Abuse*

Enfield, CT

*Domestic Abuse Services
Greenwich YWCA*

Greenwich, CT

Interval House

Hartford, CT

*Chrysalis Domestic Violence
Services*

Meriden, CT

New Horizons

Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center

New Britain, CT

*The Umbrella Center for
Domestic Violence Services*

New Haven, CT

Safe Futures

New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services

Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Testimony in Support of

**SB 1, AAC Earned Family and Medical Leave
HB 5387, AAC Paid Family Medical
HB 5386, AAC Various Pay Equity and Fairness Measures
HB 5388, AAC a Fair Minimum Wage**

Committee on Labor and Public Employees

March 8, 2018

Good afternoon Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our members provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

Paid Family and Medical Leave

We urge your support of SB 1 and HB 5387, which will create and implement a comprehensive, statewide system of paid family and medical leave for workers needing to take time off to care for themselves or a loved.

Despite research showing that the benefits of a paid family leave system include a stronger work force, positive changes in wages, and lower use of public assistance, the U.S. is one of few developed countries without such a system. The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) simply does not work for many families. FMLA only provides for UNPAID leave and is only required of companies with 50 or more employees. Most (78%) of the workers who are eligible for this type of leave don't use it because they can't afford to lose pay. Only 14% of workers in the U.S. have access to paid leave through their employer and just 5% of low wage workers have access to paid leave.

For survivors of domestic violence, SB 1 and HB 5387 would provide a meaningful source of support. Both proposals would allow family members to access paid leave to care for the survivor while she or he was obtaining treatment for an injury or other "serious health condition" resulting from the abuse. The physical and mental toll of domestic violence cannot be overstated and the support of a loved one when dealing with the aftermath can strengthen outcomes and stability for the survivor.

Connecticut does have explicit employment leave for victims of family violence (CGS § 31-51ss); however, it is not required that it be paid and it is limited to 12 days per calendar year. This time may not be sufficient for an employee to address her or his own serious health condition resulting from domestic violence and the existing law does not include any provision that would allow a family member leave time to care for the survivor.

Connecticut is a leader on family-friendly workplace policies, which in turn attracts quality workers to the state. The time to implement paid leave is now. Connecticut voters support implementing paid leave – 83% support in a 2016 AARP poll and 75% support in a 2016 CT Working Families poll. So do small businesses – a 2017 poll by BLS Research & Consulting found that 77% of small businesses in CT support paid leave.

When workers don't have access to paid leave, they are more likely to ultimately leave that place of employment. Paid leave improves worker retention and saves employers'

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expensive turnover costs. After 10 years of paid leave in California, employers overwhelmingly report positive or neutral impact on their businesses and employees report increased morale and productivity.

The Campaign for Paid Family Leave recommends a system that is:

1. **Affordable** for CT workers and businesses. We recommend a system publicly administered through the CT Department of Labor and funded by small employee deductions of 0.5% of weekly earnings. Workers would receive 100% of weekly earnings, up to a cap of \$1,000.
2. **Accessible** for all CT workers who need to take all kinds of leave (medical, parental and caregiving) in all kinds of families. The Campaign recommends legislation that expands the definition of family to include siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, and chosen family members.
3. **Adequate** and provides enough time for family care and healing. We recommend a program that offers a minimum of 12 weeks of leave.

It's time for Connecticut to adopt a paid family and medical leave system. Washington passed paid leave in 2017 with bipartisan and business support. New York passed paid leave in 2016 and both Rhode Island and New Jersey have successful paid leave programs. Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine are close and might pass legislation this year. To remain competitive in our region, Connecticut must be next. This investment in worker's health and well-being has been proven to increase worker productivity and commitment.

Pay Equity & Fair Minimum Wage

We urge your support of HB 5386 and HB 5388. Both measures would have a meaningful impact on the safety and independence of survivors of domestic violence.

While economic insecurity and poverty are not the cause of domestic violence, the intersection of these challenges can create added barriers for survivors. Survivors who are facing economic insecurity or poverty have greater difficulty accessing vital resources such as affordable housing, employment opportunities, and legal assistance. Abusive relationships can also force survivors out of educational opportunities and stable employment. These compounding effects of domestic violence and economic insecurity create barriers for survivors seeking independence and safety.

Many victims of domestic violence also have to contend with financial abuse. Financial abuse is present in 98% of abusive relationships. It is a form of domestic violence that seeks to render the victim solely dependent on the abuser. There are generally three categories of financial abuse: preventing the victim from acquiring resources, preventing the victim from using resources, or exploiting the victim's resources. Many victims do not (or are not permitted to) have gainful employment. Inadequate finances leave victims lacking autonomy and confidence that they have the economic stability to be on their own.

The safety of domestic violence survivors is directly linked to their ability to achieve economic security. The majority of victims of intimate partner violence are women who only stand to benefit from policies that increase women's economic security. Establishing pay equity and a fair minimum wage will strengthen the opportunity for many survivors to achieve economic security.

It is critical that Connecticut address its gender wage gap. Women in Connecticut are paid \$0.79 to every dollar paid to men. And it only gets worse for women of color – African American women in CT are paid \$0.58, Latinas are paid \$0.47 and Asian women are paid \$0.80 for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. A key piece of this needed change must be prohibiting employers from asking about salary history during the hiring process. By using a person's salary history to set future pay, employers allow past discrimination to drive hiring and pay decision. This forces women, especially women of color to carry pay discrimination with them from job to job.

It is also time for Connecticut to increase its minimum wage to \$15. Minimum wage workers are predominantly women and women of color who continue to shoulder primary caregiving responsibilities in their families. This can be particularly true for survivors of domestic violence who choose to leave an abusive relationship and may end up as the sole providers for their children. It is critical that they make a livable wage as they attempt to gain economic independence and provide a safe home for their children.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

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